



TIPS to improve your fertility

Patient information Fertility and Health

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One – The secret is in the timing

Many people are unaware that there are only about 6 days each month when you might get pregnant and that your best chance (33 percent average) is on the day of ovulation when one of the ovaries releases a ripe egg.

It is important that you have sex during this “window of opportunity” so that the sperm makes contact with the egg and fertilization occurs.

For a woman on a regular 28 day cycle the day of ovulation will be about 14 days after the start of her period, but this can vary, so it might help to keep a diary. There are also a number of ovulation prediction kits available and you may consider trying one of these.



Two - Reduce alcohol and cut out smoking

Heavy drinking (more than six units per day) can lower a man's sperm count and affect the health of the sperm. Women are also recommended to avoid alcohol when trying to conceive as it can affect a developing fetus and cause birth defects.

Smoking also harms sperm and can reduce a man's sex drive. It affects ovulation in women and can reduce fertility.



Three - Measure your body mass index (BMI)

Body Mass Index is calculated using height and weight and is an indicator of health. Women should have a BMI of between 19 and 30 before starting IVF treatment. Excess body fat in men is also a significant cause of low sperm counts.



Four - Eat well

Eating a healthy, balanced diet has many advantages. It helps maintain an ideal body weight, keeps the hormone levels of the body normal and improves the health of the reproductive system. Particularly good are foods that are rich in antioxidants, vitamins C AND E and Zinc may play key roles in fertility. Increasing sperm count and motility (movement) and reducing stress on eggs and the female reproductive organs.

Foods such as green leafy vegetables (folic acid, calcium and iron), eggs and dairy (calcium), nuts and seeds vitamin E, zinc and selenium) and citrus (vitamin C) provide the key nutrients.



Five – Exercise

Moderate exercise every day is key to maintaining a healthy body, helping to burn off excess body fat and reducing the effect of stress on hormone levels. For men it can boost the fertility hormone testosterone but it is important that women avoid exercise as this can result in irregular periods. Some enjoyable, low impact activities include walking, swimming, cycling, Pilates and yoga.



Six- Take it easy!

Don't forget to take time to wind down and enjoy each other's company. Emotional stress has profound effects, including interfering with the hormone responsible for egg and sperm production. Consider taking regular exercise, getting home on time and taking more frequent and/or longer holidays.



Seven- Men should avoid hard bicycle seats and hot baths

Overheated testicles can temporarily lower sperm counts. So, men should avoid saunas, hot baths, sunbathing and tight underwear.

In addition, regular and prolonged cycling on hard bike seats can also reduce fertility through pressure on the perineum-potentially damaging nerves and blood vessels to the genital areas. Consider a gel seat for cushioning these parts of the body.



Eight - Get more sleep

Getting good regular sleep of about 8 hours or more per night can help both men and women optimize their fertility. Lack of sleep can have a negative effect on hormone levels, with studies of professions involving sleep deprivation (flight attendants, shift workers etc.) showing an increase in irregular periods among women.



Nine- Think about your health

Take advice about the treatments you are taking to see if these may affect fertility. As well as over the counter medicines, some herbal remedies such as St Johns Wort, Ginkgo Bilboa and Echinacea may have an adverse effect on your fertility.